

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STAY SAFE THIS WINTER BY PREVENTING CARBON MONOXIDE
EXPOSURE**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—As we move into the winter months, Virginia citizens will be turning on their heat, increasing the risk for carbon monoxide poisoning. Due to rising gas and oil prices, this year may be especially hazardous as more people use alternative heating sources such as kerosene and wood to reduce their home heating costs. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) reminds all Virginians to be aware of the causes and warning signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless and highly poisonous gas that interferes with the delivery of oxygen in the blood to the rest of the body. It is produced by the incomplete burning of fuels including coal, wood, charcoal, natural gas, gasoline, diesel, kerosene and heating oil.

According to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 500 people nationwide die as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning each year. The CDC reports that groups including unborn babies, infants and individuals with respiratory or chronic heart problems are more prone to the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. High levels of carbon monoxide ingestion can cause loss of consciousness and death. Unless suspected, carbon monoxide poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other illnesses. People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from carbon monoxide poisoning before ever experiencing symptoms.

Knowledge is the key to preventing carbon monoxide poisoning. In most cases of unintentional poisonings, victims did not realize that carbon monoxide was being produced or building up in the air they were breathing. Carbon monoxide can be easily and cheaply detected in the home. It can be prevented with knowledge and properly installed alarm systems.

You can prevent carbon monoxide exposure by following these safety tips:

- **Have** your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- **Install** a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home and test it at least once a month, and replace carbon monoxide alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a carbon monoxide alarm should be centrally located outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms. For added protection, install additional alarms in each separate bedroom and on every level of your home.
- **Leave** your home immediately and call 911 if the alarm sounds.
Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed or nauseous.

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- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement or garage or outside near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.

To learn more about VDH's Center for Injury and Violence prevention visit www.vdh.virginia.gov or call (800) 732-8333. For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning, browse to www.cdc.gov/co/default.htm.

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